

Kansas



2017

ATSDR conducted an Exposure Investigation (EI) in Iola, Kansas in December 2016 and August 2017. Iola is home to the Former United Zinc and Associated Smelters site, which is included on the Superfund National Priority List (NPL). This hazardous waste site resulted from historical smelting operations in Iola from 1902 to 1925. Residential and non-residential properties are contaminated with elevated levels of lead in soil due to previous smelting operations. As a result, there is potential for exposure to lead in the community.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is in the process of remediating the soil in Iola based on lead levels reported from sampling conducted in 2006 and 2013. At the request of EPA, the ATSDR EI team collected blood samples from participants living within the city limits of Iola and analyzed the samples for lead. Children and women who were pregnant or of childbearing age were tested for blood lead levels (BLL). The EI results in Iola indicated that the 36 children (aged up to 11 years old) had higher BLLs compared to what would be expected based on the NHANES data; this exposure can harm children's health. Residents of Iola have a higher potential for exposure to lead given elevated concentrations of lead in soil and that the majority of homes in the community were built prior to 1978, when lead was allowed in paint. ATSDR made several recommendations to reduce lead exposure outside and inside of Iola homes and educate area health care providers about lead prevention and the importance of childhood lead testing.